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ABSTRACT

This thesis proposal investigates principal leadership in Hong Kong Christian secondary schools after the turnover of Hong Kong to China in July 1997. Principal and teacher perceptions will be used to describe three aspects of leadership: the leadership role of the principal; the changes, if any, to that role due to the turnover; and the degree of agreement between principals' and teachers' perceptions about principal leadership. The definition of principal leadership will be generated by 24 principals and teachers from eight Christian secondary schools. A collection of thematic statements will be derived from interviews with one principal and two teachers from each school. These commentaries on the leadership role of principals will form an aggregate description of the leadership role of the principal, if there is a match or mismatch between principals' and staff views within one school, and if there are any commonalities or differences across schools. The document includes a review of literature on transformational and transactional leadership, instructional leadership, leadership styles, Christian leadership, leadership dimensions, change process, and professional development. (Contains 59 references.) (DFR)

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Principal Leadership In Hong Kong Christian Secondary Schools After 1997

Thesis proposal presented at the 13th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (Hong Kong ICSEI 2000)
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by

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Principal Leadership In Hong Kong Christian Secondary Schools After 1997

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of principal leadership in Hong Kong Christian secondary schools after the handover of Hong Kong to China on 1.7.1997. Principal and teacher perceptions will be used as the basis to describe three aspects: the leadership role of the principal, the changes if any to that role due to the handover, and the degree of agreement between principals' and teachers' perceptions about principal leadership. The study and research methodology employed is a partial replication of Gurr's (1996) study of principal and teacher perceptions of the leadership role of principals in Schools of the Future in Australia.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

2.1 Background

Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, after 150 years of colonisation. Hong Kong became a special administrative region (SAR) with its own Basic Law for 50 years after the handover on 1st July 1997. Under the sovereignty of China, Hong Kong has 'self-government' which is styled as 'one country, two systems' (Dimmock & Walker, 1997:278; Ho, 1996). The handover signalled dramatic changes in many aspects - political, social, economic - impacting on the role of the principals.

Dimmock & Walker (1997) revealed Hong Kong principals' perceptions of changes before the handover. Since the Sino-British declaration in 1984, British

influence was declining while Chinese influence increased. In the 1970's, an international panel of experts was invited by the Hong Kong Government to review the educational policy process. Subsequently the Education Commission was established and produced six reports which brought about changes, e.g. the introduction of a target-oriented curriculum, new language policy, the School Management Initiative (SMI). In 1991, SMI was introduced and Hong Kong joined what Beare (1990) and Cheng (1994,1995) describe as the world-wide movement of changing from the external control management mode to a new school-based management mode. In fear of communism, increasing numbers of senior and experienced school administrators immigrated overseas, causing management problems (Dimmock & Walker, 1997:297). Many anticipated changes after 1997 include more teaching of Putonghua (Mandarin), emphasis on Chinese history and politics, and more students from mainland China, giving rise to problems such as language proficiency and increasing class size.

Principals were concerned that schools had been used by the communists to shape "the attitudes and aspirations of young people" (Bray & Lee, 1997:152), and those in Christian schools were in fear of intervention and of losing religious freedom (Dimmock & Walker, 1997:285) as China had oppressed religion in the past (Ho, 1996). Ho stated that 226 out of a total of 443 secondary schools in Hong Kong were Christian (Protestant or Catholic) in 1994, and many of them were well established with a long history and a unique culture, fame, and administration. He noted their great contribution and substantial influence on local schooling, which is reflected in the fact that many of their graduates hold key positions in almost all sectors of society.

2.2 Rationale

Given such a turbulent environment and perceived educational changes, it is timely to undertake this study and it has international significance, as the changing role of principals is being affected by 'themes', 'world-wide trends', rapid changes and increased responsibilities world-wide (e.g., Caldwell, 1993, cited in Gurr, 1996:5-9). This study may reveal valuable information about the complexity of the leadership role of Hong Kong principals, how principals implement self-management in schools and deal with changes. Professional knowledge and practices of these principals may enlighten others and promote advancement in knowledge, bringing improvement to education world-wide.

Local significance is based on the fact that a large proportion of secondary schools are Christian and they have contributed greatly to local education, suggesting excellent principal leadership. This study attempts to link local principals' experiences with those of overseas and facilitates their learning from the academics who have studied world-wide patterns and the dynamics of change (Tan, H. K., 1997; Tan, J.:1997). This study may enable school leaders of Hong Kong to learn from overseas experiences and educators. For example, Singapore moved from British rule towards self-government and independence in the 1950s and 1960s, and its experiences of change in education may provide insights (Tan, J.:1997). As the key personnel in school reform (e.g. Kaufman, 1997:101), principals may bring improvement to education which is needed to increase the capacity of Hong Kong and maintain its prosperity and status in the world. With a long involvement in church and Christian schools, the researcher also has a concern to advance Christian education which is believed to equip the younger generation not only with knowledge and skills but also with moral values and spirituality.

What follows are theories related to principal leadership which serve as background knowledge to: facilitate the researcher's understanding of experiences revealed by the school leaders, place this study in the context of others, and enable later analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data (Rankin, 1998:38).

3. PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

Shum & Cheng (1995) quote a series of studies to note the importance of leadership which influences school effectiveness, educational reforms, organisational performance and effectiveness. They note the recent trend to employ a multi-perspective approach to investigate and explain the complexities of leadership in education. For this study, "principal leadership" is defined as leadership exercised by the principal of a school, who is knowledgeable, skilful and influential in leading the whole school to achieve ideal goals and objectives. This review of literature is relevant to the principal role in Hong Kong, which is assumed to be greatly impacted by political, social and economical changes. The major theories reviewed as follows include transformational and transactional leadership, instructional leadership, leadership styles, Christian leadership, leadership dimensions, change process, and professional development.

3.1 Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Bass & Avolio (1993:49-76) differentiate between *transformational* and *transactional* leadership which can be directive or participative, democratic or authoritarian, depending on situational and personal considerations. Gurr (1996:81) summarises from the recent research of school leadership to state that transformational leadership is more relevant to the present education environment

than transactional leadership, and the former "appears to be preferred for self-managing schools and schools undergoing restructuring". Quoting some studies such as Caldwell and Spinks (1992, cited in Gurr, 1996:185), Gurr suggests that both types of leadership are needed in the current turbulent school environment. He summarises Leithwood's framework, in which there are four categories of characteristics in transformational leadership: purposes, people, structures, and culture. The *purposes* of transformational leadership include developing a shared vision, building consensus about goals, priorities, and holding high performance expectations. To the *people*, leaders provide individualised support, intellectual stimulation and modelled good professional practice. *Structures* involve dispersed leadership and democratic decision making. Principals use delegation extensively, trusting and giving freedom to staff to do the jobs delegated. School *culture* can be strengthened by various ways, such as "using symbols and rituals to express cultural values, direct and frequent communication about cultural norms, values and beliefs, and sharing power and responsibility with others" (Gurr, 1996:185). The complexity of the role requires the principals to employ either or both types of leadership to lead their followers, depending on specific school environment.

3.2 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is an important expertise required by principals because of the increased performance demands, such as to raise test scores and engage in improved instructional planning. It involves "bringing together the best learning theory, motivational psychology, and human growth and development principles into a work structure and culture" (English, Frase & Arthar, 1992:24-5). Effective principals identify different dimensions of instructional leadership and employ them: defining and communicating mission; managing curriculum and

instruction; supervising or reflecting on teaching; monitoring student progress; and promoting instructional climate (Krug, 1990, and Parker, 1993, cited in Parker & Victoria, 1997:85). Hallinger (1989:319-329) proposes the systematic development of an instructional leadership team to carry out the critical functions of curriculum, instructional coordination and supervision. The system consists of a rationale, a framework, a process, a method for assessment, and an approach to develop skills of team members. The principal, being the initiator and leader of the team, remains responsible for its performance. Some target career development for staff, based on frequent in-class observations and assistance for teachers (e.g. Hopkins, 1994; Parker & Victoria, 1997). According to Acheson and Gall (1992:11), supervision of teachers should move away from the role of an inspector towards the role of a friendly critic or collegial observer, and include observation, feedback, setting of teacher goals by the teacher with instructional leader. They suggest "clinical supervision" which improves instruction through systematic planning, observation, and intensive intellectual analysis of actual teaching performances. Instructional leadership deserves major attention by principals as most of the school hours and activities concern teaching and learning.

3.3 Leadership Styles

Delaney (1997:110) states that l*eadership style* of the school principal is the primary factor contributing to improvement in self-managing schools, and he/she is the "key player in the decentralization and restructuring process". Cheng (1991a:25) investigated the relationship between leadership style and organisational process in Hong Kong secondary schools, and he found that principal leadership being strong in four areas contribute to school success: goals and production emphasis; power and decision making; organisation/co-ordination; and human relations. In his study of

organisational behaviour in Hong Kong schools, Cheng (1991b:486-500) found four contrasting styles of organisational behaviours of the principals—headless, control, commitment, and disengagement, which are similar to those identified in the Western societies. He concluded that the commitment style of school environment is the most preferable, and he strongly recommends the balanced leadership style with high initiating structure and high relationships. He points out the lack of professional training for principals being the cause of both the headless and the control style. He gives some suggestions: the selection criteria of principals should include "sound personality and professional training in school administration" (Cheng, 1991:501); teacher education programs should emphasise professionalism; and some schools should be selected for case study in order to explore the actual school process and achieve some insights for improving the organisational environment. Principals need to be aware of their leadership styles which impact on school improvement, and they are in need of adequate training in school administration.

3.4 Christian Leadership

Jesus stated in the Bible that a leader is to serve. Greenleaf's philosophy of servant-leadership coincides with His idea and emphasises service to others and sharing power in decision-making (Rammussen, 1995:282-97). Jones (1992:xv) has been a remarkable Christian leader in business and other areas, and she identifies three categories of strengths behind Jesus' leadership techniques: self-mastery, action, and relationships. She suggests harnessing these strengths or "spiritual energy" in order to lead effectively in the next millennium. Ideally principals of Christian schools are followers of Jesus, and they exercise a unique type of leadership - *Christian leadership* - which is based on Biblical principles.

3.5 Leadership Dimensions

Multiple conceptual theories or *dimensions* have been identified, some of which have ideas which are similar or partly overlapping, or built on others. Deal (1988:211) advises principals to understand the *symbols* and *culture* of a school and be aware of the administrative subculture—which has its own informal rules and procedures. Beare, Caldwell & Millikan (1989; cited in Caldwell & Spinks, 1992:69) propose a framework for analysing school culture in which "values, philosophies and ideologies" form its core and are manifested in forms such as the statements of aims and objectives, the curriculum, organisational structures, ceremonies, rules and regulations. Caldwell (1992:6-19) has identified four dimensions of principal leadership in a self-managing school—cultural, symbolic, educational and responsive leadership. Dealing with complexities in the environment, Bolman & Deal (1993,1994,1997) propose for school leaders to use *'frames'* - human resource, political, structural, and symbolic - to define reality for themselves and for the people they work with. These frames are developed or acquired through their previous experiences in finding meaning of the world and making a proper choice of action. Each frame has "its own image of reality", and leaders learning to apply all four will develop greater appreciation and deeper understanding of their organisations (Bolman & Deal, 1997:15). Cheng's (1995:165-6) five dimensions model has incorporated Bolman & Deal's ideas—structural, human, political, symbolic and educational. Cheng states that in educational leadership, principals seek to influence others "through the generation and dissemination of educational knowledge and instructional information, development of teaching programmes and supervision of teaching performance" and "encourage professional development and teaching improvement" (Cheng, 1995:166). Whilst conceptual theories or dimensions are

useful in clarifying complexities of the educational environment. Principals need to find which are relevant to their particular context which is impacted by specific political, social, economical and cultural factors.

3.6 Change Process

Many principals were found to have difficulty in initiating, implementing, and institutionalising the *change process* in their schools, according to Bamburg & Andrews (1989:309), because they fail to understand that the change process itself is an innovation; to manage it successfully, they must understand the complexity of change. Fullan (1982:1) identify three dimensions of change—in materials, teaching approaches and beliefs. He advises leaders to recognise the dynamic complexity of change and teachers' need to be informed clearly about the ideas, rationale and the process of change. Change should be based on clear evidence of what is the best for the young people in that school, and it should be linked with the community in bringing realistic education outcomes for the younger generation (Hopkins, 1994). The principal is "dynamic change agent within an interactive system", who is required to be flexible and credible, to inspire and respect others, and be able to provide useful learning opportunities for teachers as well as students (Kaufman, 1997:101). Murphy and Hallinger (1992) note the change of the role of principalship which has become more diverse and complex, under extreme political pressures in exceedingly complex environment; and they identify *six forces* propelling fundamental changes in schools—increasing importance of education, competitive forces, demands of a changing population, changing political landscape, debureaucratization of society, and decentralisation of problems. Caldwell & Spinks (1992) identify *empowerment* as a factor underpinning change in a self-managing school. It involves a cyclical process of goal-setting, need identification, priority

setting, policy making, planning, budgeting, implementing and evaluating in a manner that provides for the appropriate involvement of staff and community, including parents and students as relevant. Principals of Hong Kong are particularly concerned with dramatic changes, and their leadership is vital in implementing changes successfully.

3.7 Professional Development

Playing the key role in schools, principals should be given the best training possible. Professional development for school leaders can take on a variety of forms and focuses. For examples, they may include skilled-based training programs, institutional programs such as schools becoming learning organisations, or participation in research. The choice of training programs for school leaders depends on what skills and abilities they require to strengthen in order to play their roles successfully. Leithwood et al. (1992:8-27) see the leadership process as problem-solving, and leaders' decision-making as simple, routine problem solving, with some complex and non-routine problems. They criticise the current leadership practices being inadequate and call for the need to study the 'internal processes' of effective leaders. If what principals do is a consequence of what they think, undoubtedly they need to strengthen their thinking abilities. Mental processes revealed by effective leaders may enlighten others to improve their thinking abilities. Marsh (1988:81) suggests training to formulate priorities and develop appropriate leadership skills, because principal are often preoccupied with competing short-term problems, giving longer-term school improvement projects a lower priority. Professional development for teachers are important as well, because "there are no effective schools without effective teachers" (Hoeben, 1989:165).

Schools becoming learning organisations are advocated by Keefe & Howard (1997:36-40), where the staff increase their capacity to create desired results, develop new ways of thinking, and are continually learning how to learn together. There are five learning disciplines to be mastered separately and together in order to build the learning organisation: building shared vision; personal mastery; mental models; team learning; and systems thinking. Schools actively seek out and experiment with new programs, with long-term involvement of all staff, may improve students' education and improve the school to the furthest. For example, a program called "Success for All" has helped disadvantaged students to be highly successful in reading achievement, and it has been replicated and widely used by many schools in U.S. (Slavin et al., 1994). Learning is achieved by all when schools become learning organisations, and success of one school extends to other schools, bringing wider improvement in education.

Powerful learning for principals and teachers comes from participation in research, and research findings may pave the way to reshape the character of schools, map the process of change and improve schools (Hopkins, 1994:1-14; Grundy, 1995:5). Lewis (1985:139) and Grundy (1995:5) regard action research as a powerful research method to improve teaching. It is also a form of professional development for teachers. Its power comes from the fact that the focus of inquiry and interest in action research is the participants' own practice. Training, learning organisation and research participation entice school leaders to become learners who continually seek to increase their knowledge and understanding, improve practice and achieve organisational success.

The above contemporary theories are relevant to principal leadership in Hong Kong Christian secondary schools. They act as the background knowledge for the researcher to proceed in the inquiry processes as described in the following section.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the phenomenon of principal leadership in Hong Kong Christian secondary schools after the handover on 1.7.1997, and it is a partial replication of Gurr's (1996) research design. This section details the research questions, explains how and why the *hermeneutic phenomenology* methodology is chosen, describes the procedures, benefits, problems, scope and parameters of this methodology.

4.1 Research Questions

In this study, the researcher investigates the following questions:

1. How is the leadership role of the principal in a Hong Kong Christian secondary school experienced by the principal after the handover on 1.7.1997?
2. How is the leadership role of the principal in a Hong Kong Christian secondary school viewed by teachers?
3. Are the principals' and teachers' perceptions consistent?
4. What model, or models, of leadership fit the leadership roles described?
5. What changes in the leadership role of these principals have occurred because of the change of sovereignty in Hong Kong?

4.2 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

In this section the researcher explains how and why the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology is chosen for this study. This study is "conclusion-

oriented" rather than "decision-oriented" (Cronbach & Suppes, cited in Jackson, 1990:3), because it is based on the researcher's commitment, rather than required by a policy-maker. The quantitative and qualitative distinction of research paradigms have been debated from conflicting positions to the present trend of compatibility and cooperation between them (Husen, 1985); although Smith & Heshusius (1986:4) stress the need to clarify further questions concerning the compatability of the methodologies. The researcher thinks that it is inappropriate to direct and restrict the informants as suggested by the quantitative paradigm, because she has been away from Hong Kong since 1994 and may therefore not be familiar with all the issues involved. Qualitative method is chosen over quantitative because it is "more adaptable to dealing with multiple realities...more sensitive to and adaptable to the many mutually shaping influences and value patterns that may be encountered" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:40; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Within the qualitative paradigm, there are numerous possible approaches. For example, case studies may involve interviewing, observation or collecting documents (Burns, 1997:365; Sturman,1994:641-4). The hermeneutic phenomenology approach is chosen for this study, because the researcher's main interest is in the comprehension of the meaning of action or text, through the discerning of themes (phenomenology) and interpretation (hermeneutics) (Miles & Huberman, 1994:7; Gurr, 1996; Van Manen,1990; Tesch, 1990). It is a kind of naturalistic inquiry which assumes that realities are multiple, constructed and holistic; therefore subjects should speak for themselves whose subjective experiences are described and interpreted in order to enrich human understanding and illuminate practices (Gurr, 1996: 85-9).

4.3 Research Procedures

Using the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, there are six research activities, all applicable in this study:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (Van Manen, 1990:30-1).

Two aspects are emphasised in this approach: the description of phenomena (the phenomenological aspect) and interpretation of the description (the hermeneutic aspect) (Gurr,1996; Van Manen, 1990). The research procedures of sampling, collecting data, data analysis and interpretation are detailed below.

(1) Sampling

The researcher uses purposive sampling for this study, which is choosing the participants "based on criteria or standards necessary" (Burns, 1997:370). It increases the range of data, enables multiple realities to be uncovered, maximises the capacity to devise grounded theory, and enables the researcher to take adequate account of "local conditions, local mutual shapings, and local values" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:40). Principal participants will be nominated by the Christian sponsoring bodies or denominations. Two teacher participants per school will be nominated by principals. As this research is concerned with teacher perceptions of the principal leadership role and not an evaluation by teachers of their principal's leadership, it

does not matter whether the teachers are supportive of the principal or not. Principals will be asked to select teachers, preferably of different gender, who have sufficient knowledge of the principal's work to provide information. The sample of 24 participants will be each given an interview (Cantonese or/and English) that lasts about one hour. Though the sample is smaller than Gurr's (1996:107), it is considered sufficient for three reasons: similarity of role between principals, school sites being compact, and manageability of the thesis—especially as two languages will be used in the transcription of the interviews.

Participants to be nominated will have had long service in their schools and thus maximise the information to be revealed, with principals of at least five years experience before 1997, and two years experience for the two teachers. Each subject may withdraw from the research, and they will be informed before interviewing that tape recording, transcription and excerpts will be made use of. Transcripts will be read and corrected of errors by the participants, who will remain anonymous as well as their schools.

(2) Collecting Data

In focusing on the phenomenon of principal leadership, the researcher could investigate the lived experiences of the school leaders by collecting the data with various techniques—personal experience; protocol writing; interviewing; observing; use of literature, biography, diaries, journals, logs, phenomenological literature or art (Gurr, 1996: 86). However, to avoid generating too much data, the researcher will interview the research participants to gather their perceptions of principal leadership as experienced in their school, and collect relevant documents which concern the change of educational policy and school programs due to the handover. Though there are multiple perspectives of principal leadership, no predetermined theoretical

framework is used to lead participants to express their thoughts. The researcher seeks to minimise her influence on the participants to allow them to reveal their own views on principal leadership and covey their own understandings, experiences and expertise. Yet the researcher's influence still exists because of the investigation being based on her own interests, understanding, research design and the leadership literature studied (Gurr, 1996).

In-depth interviewing is the major tool used by the researcher, and techniques are drawn from Burns (1997:331-5), Gurr (1996:87-9), Seidman (1991:31-71), and Minichiello et al. (1990, 1995). The researcher asks the principal to reflect on his/her experience of being a principal subjectively, and the staff teachers to reflect on their understanding of the principal's leadership role at their school. The interviewer, being an experienced teacher and a deaconess in church, presents the opening question, using "an active listening technique (emphatic responding) to maintain the conversation until the conversation between the interviewer and interviewee reaches a natural conclusion" (Gurr, 1996:87-88). The researcher aims to elicit data and maintain the conversation in exploring principal and teacher perceptions of principal leadership. Questions are broad and non-prescriptive, setting the boundaries without constraint or direction for the discussion. Minimal questions are used to enable the informants to express fully their views. Their perspectives are well respected as there is little interference from the researcher. No standard list of questions are to be used and the conversation is supposed to be free flowing, and it relies heavily "on the quality of the social interaction between the investigator and informant, that can be subtly redirected by the interviewer if it should stray too far off the track of the research study" (Burns, 1997:331). The interviewer has in mind a number of check

questions to be asked directly or indirectly, so as to keep focus and ensure that the phenomenon is explored in depth in each interview (Gurr, 1996: 88).

The researcher listens to the interviewee with empathy, i.e. • rojecting oneself into a situation as the other person is experiencing it and so fully comprehending how it seems to the other person" (Howe, 1982:27, cited in Gurr, 1996:88). Empathic responding encourages the interviewee to continue the conversation as they feel that they are being listened to. To maintain focus (principal leadership) in an interview, direct questioning is used to bring back generalised discussion to the level of concrete experience. Concrete examples which are common for a particular school will be used, e.g. a recent curriculum reform may be used to explore the principal's leadership role (Gurr. 1996:87-9; Van Manen, 1990:67-68).

Being aware that the sample is culturally different from Gurr's (1996:88), the researcher is equipped with a large number of check questions to be asked directly or indirectly to ensure that the conversation is maintained in each interview and the phenomenon is explored in depth. In case the conversation stalls, direct questions may be used to illicit appropriate responses. Examples of check questions are listed below:

1. In discussing the leadership role were concrete examples used? (e.g. policies/ programs/ curriculum changes/ ...)
2. How is the school run? How is it different from a secular school? What is the mission/ organisational structure/ daily routine/ culture/ ...in the school?
3. What is the principal's role after the handover on 1.7.1997? (i.e. What policies/ programs/ curriculum changes/ ... have been implemented because of the handover?) How is the role different from a secular school? How does the principal regard this role before and after the handover?

4. What changes have been made to the principal's role because of the handover? Are there any special changes because this is a Christian school? How does the principal regard these changes?
5. How are major decisions made and what is the role of the principal in a Christian secondary school in Hong Kong? What religious principles are applied?
6. What changes have occurred in principal leadership because of the handover on 1.7.1997? What documents provide evidence to these changes? How does the principal regard these changes?

(3) Data Analysis and Interpretation

The narrative data generated will be largely defined by the participants whose perceptions may be difficult to confirm with respect to accuracy. However, accuracy is enhanced by using the perceptions of not only the principals' but also their teachers'. The transcribed narrative data will be shown to the participants whose confirmation may enhance the accuracy of the representation of their views. This accuracy is further enhanced by comparing the transcript with the collected documents concerning the change of educational policy and school programs due to the handover.

The techniques used to organise and analyse the narrative data and documents for meaning, are derived from phenomenology, hermeneutics and case study (Gurr, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tesch, 1990:92-4). The data (text or action) will be understood, looked for themes, and interpreted by making comments on the themes, based on the researcher's understanding which has been enriched by the contemporary theories and research findings on leadership (Gurr, 1996). The researcher reflects on the essential themes from transcripts and describes the phenomenon through the art of writing (transcription) and rewriting (themes) which

is "the application of *logos* (language and thoughtfulness) to a phenomenon (an aspect of lived experience)" (Van Manen, 1990:34).

The researcher engages in logical analysis in all aspect of the research activity similar to scientific research (Pedhazur & Pedhazur, 1991:59), and she checks and analyses qualitative data through considering "parts and whole" constantly to "measure the overall design of the study/text against the significance that the parts must play in the total textual structure" (Van Manen, 1990:33-34). Data analysis processes are well documented to help the researcher learn, reflect, understand better, and refine the methods during the research process. NUD•IST (**N**on-numerical **u**nstructured **d**ata **i**ndexing, **s**earching, and **t**heory-building) may be a useful computer package for coding and analysing data (Weitzman & Miles, 1995:256).

The best way of writing up depends on the themes that emerge from the data collected. Van Manen (1990:163) states that the researcher "needs to be creative in finding approaches and procedures uniquely suited to this particular project". The result may be written "thematically, analytically, exemplificatively, exegetically, existentially" or with an invented approach to address the fundamental question appropriately. An interpretational analysis system similar to Gurr's (1996:90-97) and Tesch's (1990:93) will be developed, and it involves processes such as reading and rereading transcripts, delineating 'meaning units', condensing statements to derive themes, and then categorising and interpreting themes to address the research questions.

4.4 Benefits and problems associated with qualitative research.

The benefits and problems associated with hermeneutic phenomenology methodology are similar to those found in the qualitative paradigm (Gurr, 1996:97-110; Yin, 1994). This research provides rich descriptions and interpretations of the phenomenon of principal leadership in Hong Kong. It can lead to findings which are new and unexpected by the researcher, because no pre-set conceptual frameworks are used. The findings may be better understood by many readers because they are presented in words rather than in numbers. However, problems come from several factors. Much time is needed in data collection, interpretation and analysis. Subjectivity in qualitative research raises the issues of *researcher bias, trustworthiness, reliability, validity, credibility, transferability* or *generalisability*.

Researcher Bias may come from subjectivity in selecting evidence or in explaining the evidence found (Burns, 1997 379-80), and it can be minimised by using a systematic technique to extract the themes, providing full transcripts to show how the meaning units are extracted and the themes generated, and allowing the validity of the interpretations to be checked by readers (Gurr, 1996).

Trustworthiness in this study is enhanced through the multiple perspectives of principals and teachers across eight schools, the provision of details concerning the analysis processes, interview transcripts, thematic analysis, and the researcher's prior understandings in contemporary theories (Gurr, 1996). The researcher keeps a reflective journal to record: the daily schedule and logistics of the study; a personal diary for reflection and insight recording; and a methodological log for decision and rationale recording (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:252-80). This journal is not used as data, but it may help the researcher to be consistent and maintain focus in the research processes. Documenting procedures and decisions made helps in the establishment of

trustworthiness. Further, trustworthiness is enhanced as the researcher attempts to understand the phenomenon through interviewing and reading the transcripts of interviews from both principals and teachers, whose transcripts have been checked by the participants for confirmation of their accuracy (e.g. through Burns, 1997:293, 381; Gurr, 1996; Sturman, 1994:644; Pedhazur & Pedhazur, 1991).

Internal validity, external validity or *construct validity* are prerequisites to trustworthiness, reliability or credibility. Internal validity is achieved through triangulation and the rechecking with participants of the transcripts (e.g. Burns, 1997; Gurr, 1996). It enhances external validity and both of them contribute to generalisability of findings. Construct validity can be improved by "multiple sources of evidence to demonstrate convergence of data from all sources" and "chain of evidence that links parts together" (Burns, 1997:382). All these concepts are closely related to what Evers & Lakomski (1991), and Lakomski (1992:201) stress—the researcher needs to present arguments with consistency, coherence and be able to present the best explanation. Further, validation of the theory comes from justification of new theory, correspondence with established theories, and continued usefulness of the theory in practice (Kaplan, 1994:5049).

Transferability or *generalisability* means the conclusions of an inquiry being "applicable to more than the particular context of the inquiry" (Kaplan, 1994:5056). It is not to be judged by the researcher, but by those who use the findings from this study. The responsibility of the researcher is to ensure that there is sufficient data available for others to make this judgment. Various records of transcripts, meaning units, analysis processes, summaries of interviews are used, and they are made to be available for examination, thus establishing the dependability and confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:327). That is what disciplined inquiry should be:

"data, arguments, and reasonings be capable of withstanding careful scrutiny by another member of the scientific community" (Shulman, 1988:5). The researcher's action is trying "to facilitate the reader's own analysis more than deliver statements of generalisation" (Burns, 1997:381).

5. SCOPE AND PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY

The definition of principal leadership is self-generated by the responses of the principals and teachers—a total of 24 participants from 8 Christian secondary schools of Hong Kong. A collection of thematic statements are derived from interviews conducted with one principal and two teachers from each school. At the end of the interview process, 24 commentaries on the leadership role of principals are used to form an aggregate description of the leadership role of the principal. The description is analysed and interpreted by the researcher who finds out what the principal leadership is for the 24 participants. Though the sample size is smaller than Gurr's (1996), the study will still be able to provide useful information on the perceptions of principal leadership in Christian secondary schools of Hong Kong. Similarity in the leadership role between these principals, and compact school sites (in Section 4.3,1) may allow for the use of a smaller number of participants, as data will soon become redundant. From this data base and the literature, the researcher analyses, interprets and determines the principal leadership style viewed from the principals' and teachers' perspectives; if there is a match or mismatch between principal and staff views (within one school); and if there are any commonalities or differences across schools. Through analysis of the relevant documents collected, the researcher determines the changes in the leadership role of the principals because of the handover of Hong Kong to China on 1.7.1997.

6. TRIAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

Outline of Thesis Chapters:

Synopsis

Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose - This will be a brief description of what is trying to be discovered by conducting the research.

Background - political and educational context in Hong Kong before and after 1.7.1997.

The research questions will be detailed in this chapter.

Summary of chapters.

Chapter Two: Literature Review.

A review of literature related to principal leadership. Transformational and transactional leadership, instructional leadership, leadership styles, Christian leadership, leadership dimensions, change process, and professional development.

Chapter Three: Methodology.

A description of *hermeneutic phenomenology* and the research procedure - sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation, including critical analysis of the chosen methodology.

Chapter Four: Results.

This will include the following sections:

1. Characteristics of the schools, summary of perceptions from the principals and teachers involved.
2. Thematic descriptions of the data generated for principalship by the principal and the teachers from each school. Comparison for each

school between the thematic descriptions of the principal and of the teachers.

3. Summary of the findings relating to the self perception and staff perception of the changes in principalship after 1.7.1997.

Chapter Five: Discussion.

Similarity in principal and teacher perception will be discussed. The findings of the study will be related to the literature on principal leadership. Specifically, the data will be analysed to determine which dimensions of leadership best describe the data and to determine what differences exist between data derived from principals and data derived from teachers. There will be an emphasis on Christian leadership.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Implications

Specific findings, general conclusions and future research directions will be given.

References

Appendices:

These will be contained in a separate volume and include:

1. Transcripts of interviews.
2. Descriptors generated from individual data.

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4 RESULTS
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5 DISCUSSION
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